

DIY Media: Movement Perspectives on Critical Moments, produced by Mark Read. A DVD Series from Deep Dish TV (1988-2010).

A Review in Two Parts

Part II by Susan Maret

Deep Dish TV, the first grassroots satellite network in the United States, was created in 1986 by Paper Tiger TV as a “distribution network, linking independent producers, programmers, community-based activists and viewers who support movements for social change and economic justice” (Deep Dish, Mission). Rather than present “short, single bits of news broadcast on the commercial networks, Deep Dish gives many reports on the same issue” (Halleck 417). Deep Dish TV not only “demonstrates how national in scope the issues are,” but communicates social problems “opposite of what decontextualized fragments of mainstream network news does. On Deep Dish, issues are contextualized and made coherent” (Halleck 418).

Deep Dish TV’s *Access to Oxygen* – available as a three DVD set that can be ordered through the Deep Dish Web site or downloaded from Internet Archive - is really a set of “films within films” that explore hazardous waste policy, environmental justice,¹ environmental racism,² and the affect of toxic and hazardous wastes on human health and ecosystems. Through documentary footage of government hearings, demonstrations, personal accounts, and community case studies, *Access to Oxygen* not only illustrates the personal is political, but suggests the notion of street science as conceived by Jason Coburn. Street science springs in part from local or community knowledge, which Coburn (p.12) describes as “the scripts, images, narratives, and understandings we use to make sense of the world in which we live.” Street science is also a practice of science, political inquiry, and action, which is situated and evolves in a community (Coburn, p.44).”³

Disc 1 of *Access Oxygen* includes the film “Garbage,” produced by Carolyn Rogoff in collaboration with Staten Island Community TV (1990). Through interviews with community members, hearings and news footage on the infamous Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island situated within the Fresh Kills estuary, once the world’s largest garbage dump, “Garbage” investigates the politics of trash. This segment also importantly links the evolution of scientific thinking of “swamps” as throwaway land to the current understanding of



Photo from ChicanaFeliz's Flickr site http://farm1.static.flickr.com/471/48874859_6b08820203.jpg accessed 2 Dec. 2010

the criticality of wetlands as wildlife habitat and in moderating climate. In addition to these topics, policy aspects of landfill and incinerator siting are discussed via the sociopolitics of NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) and NIABY (Not in Anyone's Backyard). Included within the "Garbage" documentary are Roger Bailey and Paul Connett's film "Auburn Maine Incinerator and & Ash Landfill" and the classic Greenpeace film "Rush to Burn." Disc 1 also contains the 1994 film "Breathless," produced by Cathy Scott and Susan Levine of Paper Tiger TV, which explores New York City's announcement to permit seven incinerators in a low income community.

Disc 2 of *Access to Oxygen* includes the film "Environmental Racism" (1990), which explores hazardous waste incineration in South Chicago and American Cyanamid's shipping of mercury waste to Thor SA for "recycling," a practice that resulted in contamination of the Zulu drinking supply in the community of Land of a 1,000 Hills. Within the documentary is a discussion of rancher encroachment and poaching of natural resources on Waura Indian (Brazil) sacred lands and historical footage from the Interdenominational Hearings on Toxics in Minority Communities featuring testimony from minority industrial workers. Additionally, Disc 2 includes "Toxic Wars" (1994), a series of interviews and footage of Maquilladora industries responsible for transboundary pollution in the towns of Brownsville, Texas and Motamoros, Mexico.

Access to Oxygen Disc 3 includes a panel discussion with filmmakers held at NYU on October 3, 2008.⁴ Of note from the panel discussion is a call for a systemic approach to waste policy that not only emphasizes a reduction in product packaging, but active waste reduction, recycling, reuse, and community responsibility for the wastes they generate, as in the model of the European Union's Green Dot system. Adoption of sustainable waste programs would not only transform existing waste-handling by way of a systems approach, but retire those practices that continue to compromise human health and ecosystems – and impinge on environmental rights.

Access to Oxygen is highly recommended for purchase by a wide range of libraries that wish to enhance their environmental policy collections as well as support alternative media. Equally worthy is linking the series through the library's OPAC to Internet Archive, where patrons may discover Deep Dish TV socially-relevant work.

Works Cited

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Halleck, DeeDee. "Deep Dish TV: Community Video from Geostationary Orbit." *Leonardo* 26.5 (1993):415-420.

End Notes

1. Defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies," see <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/>.
2. For an exploration of environmental racism, see Robert D. Bullard's *Dumping in Dixie* (1990, Westview Press) and GAO Hazardous and *Nonhazardous Waste: Demographics of People Living near Waste Facilities*, RCED-95-84, June 13, 1995, <http://archive.gao.gov/t2pbat1/154854.pdf>. Also see Clinton Executive Order 12898, 1994, "Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" that mandates "each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States and its territories..." see <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12898.pdf>.
3. See Susan Maret, review of *Street Science: Community Knowledge and Environmental Health Justice* (MIT Press, 2005), in *Electronic Green Journal* Issue 23 (2006), <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/20k0s0xn?query=maret>.
4. Producer Carolyn Rogoff said of the relevance of *Access to Oxygen*: "the films could have been made yesterday."



Deep Dish TV's Facebook Image

Editor's Note: As this issue was going to press, Deep Dish issued Part V in this series. The following description is from their website.

Behind the Bars: Exposing and Transforming the Prison Industrial Complex

Production Year: 2010

Runtime: 4:05:00

Series: DIY Media: Movement Perspectives on Critical Moments

Subjects: Crime, Law, and Justice, Racism, Prisons

CatalogueNumber: 03524

Behind the Bars: Exposing and Transforming the Prison Industrial Complex showcases four programs from the Deep Dish TV archive and a fascinating discussion with a rare gathering of prison activists, filmmakers, and media theorists, who dissect the history of grass-roots media coordination in America and its role in confronting the prison industrial complex. Part five of the series, *DIY Media: Movement Perspectives on Critical Moments*.